

Message Text

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TAGS: ELAB, ILO, OAU, US

SUBJECT: THE AFRICAN ROLE AT THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR
CONFERENCE (ILC)

REFS.: (A) STATE 139034; (B) GENEVA 5044

SUMMARY: ROLE OF AFRICAN DELEGATES AT INTERNATIONAL LABOR
CONFERENCE WAS ESSENTIALLY PASSIVE. MOST FOLLOWED LEAD OF
RADICAL ARABS ON KEY ISSUES IN NAME OF AFRO/ARAB OR GROUP
77 SOLIDARITY. NOTEWORTHY EXCEPTIONS WERE KENYA, LIBERIA,
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SIERRA LEONE WORKER, MALAWI GOVT AND EMPLOYER, TOGO WORKER
AND EMPLOYER, NIGERIAN EMPLOYER AND GHANA EMPLOYER WHO
VOTED WITH US ON EITHER ARTICLE 17 PROPOSED AMENDMENT OR
REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON APPLICATION OF CONVENTIONS AND RECOM-
MENDATIONS. SWAZILAND SUPPORTED BOTH. ZAMBIA VERBALLY
SUPPORTED US POSITIONS IN PRIVATE BUT WAS ABSENT DURING KEY
VOTES. OPPOSITION WAS LED BY SOMALIA, EGYPT, ALGERIA,

LIBYA, TUNISIA, IRAQ, USSR. DESPITE ABSENCE OF SUPPORT, MANY AFRICAN DELEGATES AT END OF CONFERENCE URGED U.S. NOT TO LEAVE ILO. END OF SUMMARY.

1. AFRICAN ROLE DURING 63RD INTERNATIONAL LABOR CONFERENCE (ILC) WAS ESSENTIALLY PASSIVE. MAJORITY OF THOSE WHO DID PARTICIPATE ACKNOWLEDGED NEED FOR PRINCIPLE OF US-PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO ARTICLE 17, I.E., NO CONDEMNATION WITHOUT PRIOR INVESTIGATION, BUT TIED THIS TO GENERAL STRUCTURAL OVERHAUL. IN DEBATE OF REPORT ON COMMITTEE OF APPLICATION OF STANDARDS ONLY SUDANESE EMPLOYER, ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT AND TOGO WORKER PARTICIPATED. SUDANESE URGED REJECTION DUE TO INCLUSION IN REPORT APPENDIX OF ISRAELI REPORT ON LABOR IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. ETHIOPIAN OBJECTED TO COMMITTEE "PASSING JUDGMENT" ON SOVEREIGN GOVERNMENTS (READ ETHIOPIA). TOGO REP SUGGESTED AMENDMENT SEVERING ISRAELI ISSUE FROM REST OF REPORT, ALLOWING ADOPTION OF REMAINDER OF REPORT. HOWEVER, HE DID NOT PRESENT THIS AS FORMAL AMENDMENT.

2. SOMALIS, NORTH AFRICANS, USSR LED OPPOSITION TO US REFORM EFFORTS. TACTICS IN COMMITTEES AND PLENARY WERE FOR DESIGNATED LEAD-OFF SPEAKER TO ISSUE STATEMENT IN NAME OF GROUP OF 77 OR AFRICAN/ARAB SOLIDARITY. PRE-SELECTED DELEGATES FOLLOWED IN QUICK SUCCESSION WITH SUPPORTING SPEECHES, ALL ACCOMPANIED BY INTENSIVE LOBBYING IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AISLES. MODERATES FACED WITH SITTING QUIET, SUPPORTING RADICALS, OR BREAKING WITH CLAIMED THIRD WORLD SOLIDARITY. NONE REPEAT NONE CHALLENGED AUTHORITY OF CLAIMED SPOKESMEN IN PLENARY. WE UNDERSTAND LIBERIAN AND SIERRA LEONE WORKERS OBJECTED IN COMMITTEES AND IN WORKERS' CAUCUSES TO PRESUMPTION OF OTHERS TO SPEAK FOR THEIR WORKERS. ALSO NOTED NUMEROUS DELEGATES BROKE WITH ARAB/SOVIET BLOC WITHIN COMMITTEE ON APPLICATION OF CONVENTIONS.

3. ZAMBIANS, SIERRA LEONE, KENYANS AMONG MOST VOLUBLE US SUPPORTERS IN CORRIDORS. HOWEVER, ZAMBIANS ABSENT FROM HALL WHEN KEY VOTES TAKEN. CAMEROON (WHICH PROVIDED COMMITTEE RAPPORTEUR), KENYA, SWAZILAND, MALAWI GOVT AND EMPLOYER, TOGO WORKER AND EMPLOYER VOTED WITH U.S. ON KEY VOTE ON REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF APPLICATION OF CONVENTIONS. SWAZILAND, LIBERIA, SIERRA LEONE WORKER, AND GHANA EMPLOYER WERE WITH US ON ARTICLE 17 PROCEDURAL VOTE.

4. NUMEROUS DELEGATIONS, OF WHICH SENEGAL, GABON, IVORY COAST, NIGERIA, GHANA MOST PROMINENT, STATED TO US THEY

AGREED IN PRINCIPLE WITH US POSITION RE ARTICLE 17, BUT WERE UNWILLING TO BUCK RADICALS WHO TIED THIS TO DEMAND FOR GENERAL OVERHAUL OF ILO STRUCTURE. THIS PERMITTED THESE DELEGATES TO CLAIM SUPPORT FOR US OBJECTIVE WHILE AGREEING WITH THOSE WHOSE PURPOSE WAS TO BURY US PROPOSAL. NET EFFECT WAS TO OPPOSE US AMENDMENT.

5. IN VOTE ON REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON APPLICATION OF CONVENTIONS FORMAL ABSTENTION OF FIFTY-THREE AF DELEGATES FROM TWENTY-ONE COUNTRIES, EXCLUDING NORTH AFRICANS, WAS MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO CONFERENCE DECISION NOT TO ACCEPT REPORT. SEVERAL OTHER AFRICAN DELEGATES WERE PRESENT BUT DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE VOTE.

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6. DESPITE ABSENCE OF SUPPORT FOR US POSITIONS, US DELEGATES WERE APPROACHED AT END OF CONFERENCE BY NUMEROUS AFRICAN DELEGATES URGING US TO RECONSIDER LETTER OF INTENT TO WITHDRAW. RESPONSE WAS THAT DECISION NOT YET TAKEN BUT THAT RESULTS OF CONFERENCE WILL BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION AT TIME DECISION IS MADE.

7.COMMENT: FAILURE OF MODERATES TO AGREE ON COMMON POSITION AND UNWILLINGNESS TO OPPOSE RADICALS LEFT MODERATES SUBJECT TO HEAVY PRESSURE AND INTENSE LOBBYING. DECLARATIONS ADOPTED AT APRIL TRIPOLI MEETING OF AFRICAN LABOR MINISTERS WERE CITED THROUGHOUT THE CONFERENCE AS BASIS FOR RADICAL POSITIONS AND AS AUTHORITY FOR THOSE CLAIMING TO SPEAK IN NAME OF ALL AFRICANS. END OF COMMENT. VANCE

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